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SUBJECT: U/S HUGHES 1/23 MEETING WITH HONG KONG HOME
SECRETARY PATRICK HO

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Classified By: JAMES B. CUNNINGHAM, CONSUL GENERAL REASON: 1.4 (B), (D)
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¶1. (SBU) During the otherwise informal and largely unscripted meeting between visiting U/S Karen P. Hughes and Hong Kong Home Affairs Secretary Patrick Ho on January 23 (report on visit septel), Ho pulled out a prepared text when Hughes alluded to China,s "one country, two systems" approach to Hong Kong. Trying unsuccessfully to look natural and keep the script discreetly beneath the table, Ho then proceeded to read a short paragraph urging foreign official visitors to the territory to "consider carefully Hong Kong,s unique situation and characteristics" before "making public statements," and to "refrain from any action or words that would interfere in the internal politics of China or the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China." His body stiffened and his voice grew tense as he read the text.

¶2. (C) Comment: The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs Commissioner,s Office approached the Consulate late last week to raise concerns about the intent and scope of the visit of U/S Hughes. At a luncheon meeting on January 19, the Director General of the Policy Research Office of the Commissioner and the Commissioner,s Spokesman raised similar concerns*in almost identical language (but much smoother delivery)*with the Consulate,s economic/political and public affairs chiefs. This was just a day or so, as we understand it, after Mainland authorities began shutting down Beijing and Guangzhou plans for web chats for Hughes as part of her Mainland China program. The implication is that central leadership -- probably above the Foreign Ministry level -- had become aware of the trip, and had issued instructions to ensure that there be no surprises or embarrassing statements. Clearly, Beijing reflected its concerns to the Hong Kong Government, which felt constrained to make the points painfully clear to us. After Ho had finished reading his script, he returned it to his pocket and again resumed a conversational tone with the look of a schoolboy who had just completed an unpleasant but necessary task assigned by a demanding schoolmaster. End Comment.
Cunningham